

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report January 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- Cross APHIS collaboration on surveillance issues – Veterinary Services (VS) and Wildlife Services (WS) personnel met in Fort Collins Colorado on January 13th to discuss collaboration on monitoring and surveillance of livestock diseases at the livestock-wildlife interface. Work is also proceeding on a proposal for collaborative VS-WS-IS (International Services) approaches to wildlife surveillance. A number of Safeguarding Review recommendations encouraged additional understanding of wildlife-livestock issues (#s 135, 136). Other recommendations called for clarifications of the role of WS and expanded cooperation with wildlife agencies (#s 132, 133).

Response

- Additional work on FMD model – VS hosted Canadian animal health officials to continue work on the FMD spread model. The model is of use in planning response strategies. APHIS and CFIA are developing a user manual and training materials. An agreement to fund the development of a supercomputer version of the model is also being drafted. Development of models to assist in planning for response is consistent with Safeguarding Review recommendation #130.
- Tribal emergency response plans – A cooperative agreement is being developed with three prominent Tribal agriculture coalitions. The cooperative agreement will assist in the establishment of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with 120 Tribal Nations. MOUs with these Tribal Nations will address emergency response issues such as access to tribal lands during an animal health emergency. Safeguarding Review recommendation #117 calls for funding and supporting the development of cooperative agreements with individual states for specific response plans.

Laboratory Systems

- Laboratory data standards development – A training session on laboratory data standards was held in January for laboratories involved in the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). Implementation of data standards will facilitate the exchange of data between laboratories. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system (#s 17, 74, and 121).

- Training on transporting infectious materials – Sixty personnel from NVSL, CVB, and NADC (National Animal Disease Center) were trained on handling and transporting potentially dangerous biological products. Training topics included new/revised regulations and a comprehensive guide to shipping infectious substances and diagnostic specimens. Safeguarding Review recommendation #108 calls on VS to expand its ability to trace and control potentially contaminated materials.

Veterinary Accreditation

- Improvements in the accreditation process – As of January 1st, Certificates of Veterinary Accreditation no longer require the APHIS Administrator's signature. Elimination of this requirement should decrease the delay between completion of the accreditation process and receipt of the certificate. The web-based Veterinary Accreditation database (VAS) was recently moved to a production website. This move should reduce the number of problems reported with the system. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations #s 69, 101, 145, 146, and 147 call for VS to revise the accreditation program.

Information Technology

- Tracking animal movements – VS assisted the State of Colorado in assessing the APHIS electronic Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI) at the National Western Stock Show in Denver Colorado. The ICVI was utilized for twenty livestock sales occurring during the Stock Show. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encourage VS to adopt new technologies and improve processes related to tracking animal movements (#s 77 and 108).

Organizational Dynamics

- On-line job application and referral system – VS personnel assisted the APHIS staffing office in preparing materials to allow the use of the PEARS (Prospective Employee Application and Referral System) for Veterinary Medical Officer and Animal Health Technician positions. Through PEARS, the application process for federal jobs is streamlined. Safeguarding Review recommendation #77 encourages VS to adopt new technologies and improve processes.

II. Implementation activities:

The Organizational Dynamics/Communications Issue Group submitted two action plans. The action plans are now undergoing review after which they will be forwarded to the VS Management Team for approval. The Issue Group plans to meet again in late March.

The Information Technology Issue Group held a conference call on January 15th. During the next two months, members of the Issue Group will be attending IT related conferences which include sessions pertinent to the development of the Group's action

plans. A face to face meeting is being planned for late March in Miami where the group will be able to view the use of IT technology at the port and by local veterinary practitioners.

The National Surveillance System Issue Group submitted three action plans. The action plans are now undergoing review after which they will be forwarded to the VS Management Team for approval.

Members of the Veterinary Accreditation Issue Group interacted with contractors from SI International to assure that the streamlining effort SI International is working on will cover issues identified in the safeguarding review. The Veterinary Accreditation Issue Group is planning a meeting in February. Action plans will be finalized at this meeting.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

